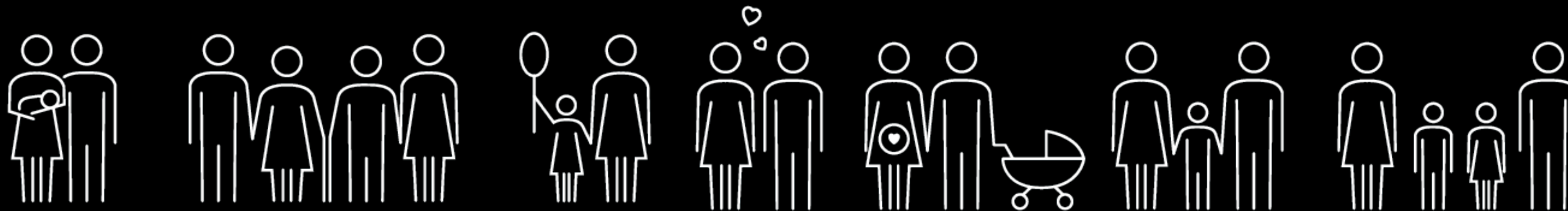
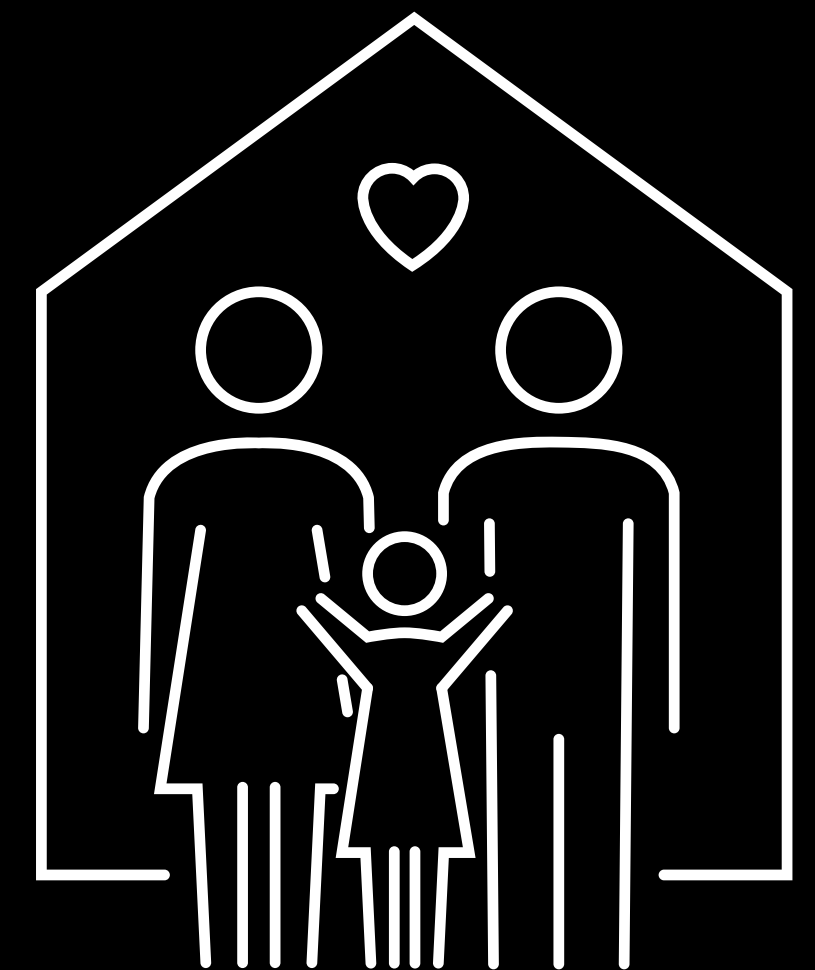


Working with Families Part I:

Understanding and Assessing Families



Jacob Campbell, Ph.D LICSW at Heritage University for SOWK 487 in Spring of 2026



Plan for Week 2

Agenda

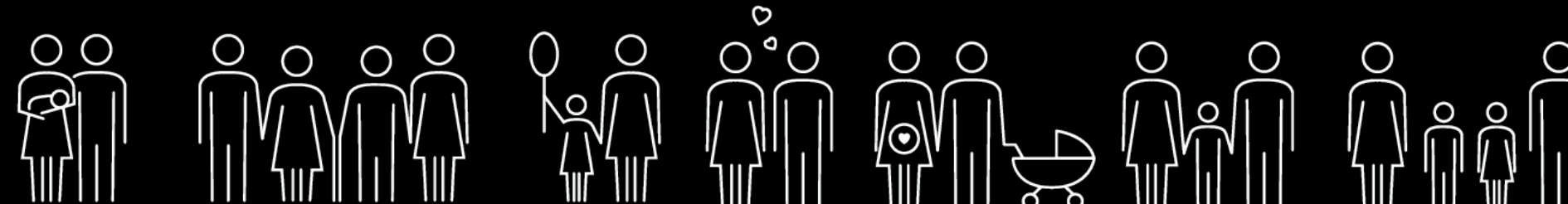
Genogram cutout activity

Strengths perspective and families

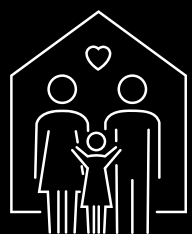
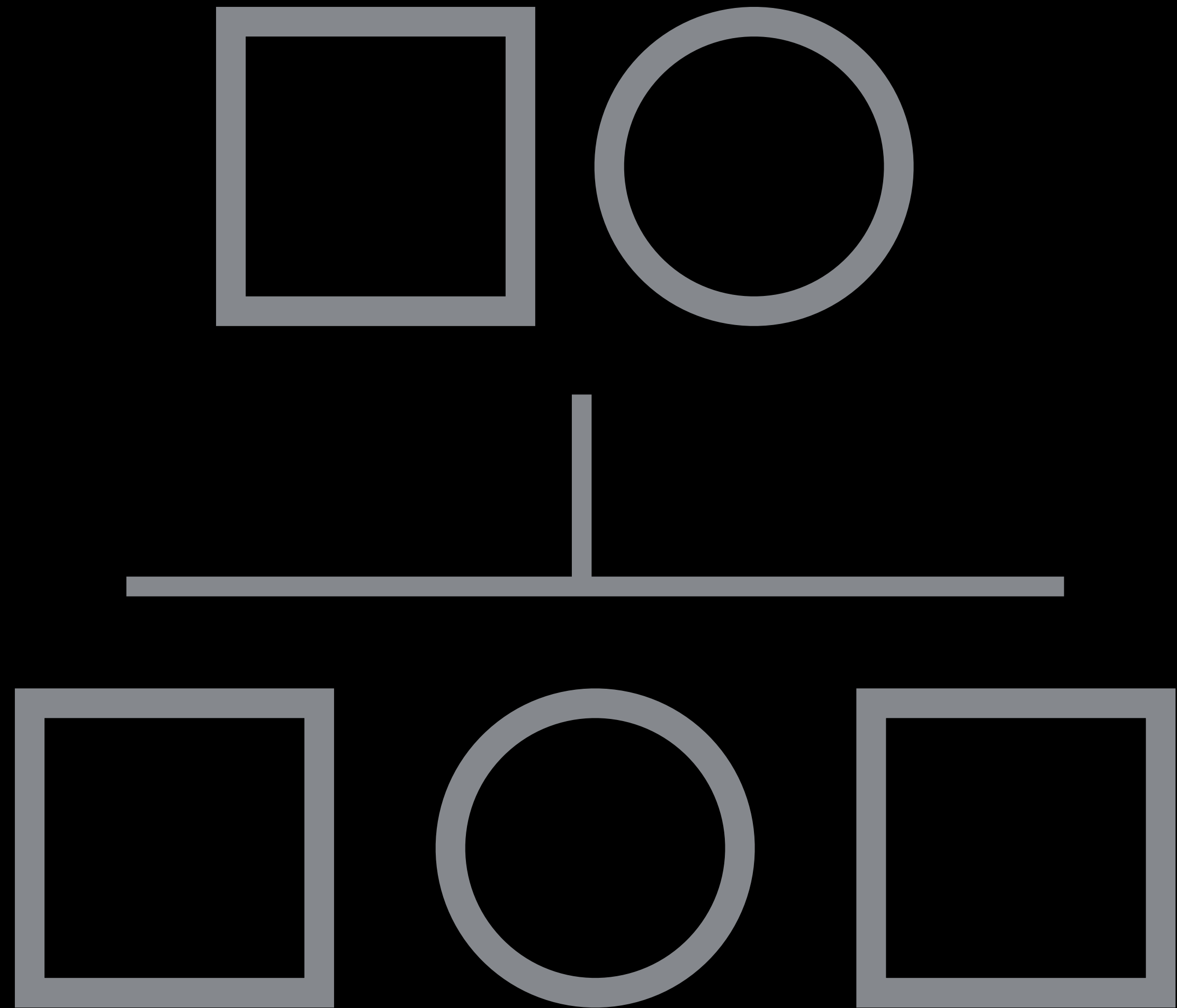
Engagement and assessment with families

Learning Objectives

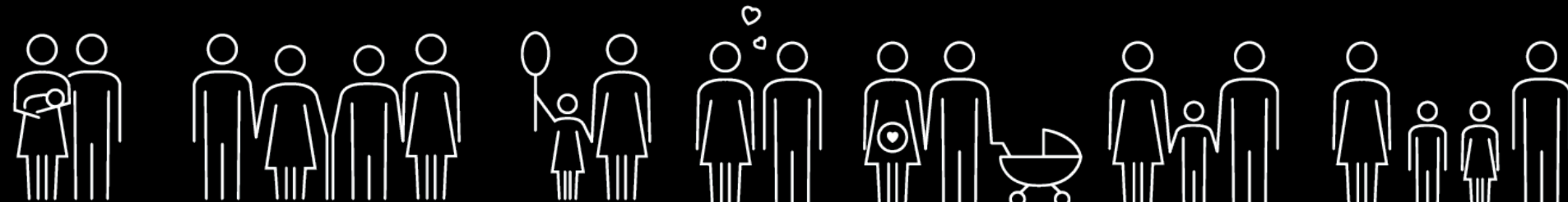
- Engaging in a group activity that can later be implemented with clients
- Identify and articulate strengths within family systems using a strengths-based perspective.
- Describe core functions and diverse structures of families from a generalist social work lens.
- Explain key concepts of family systems theory, including homeostasis, roles, rules, boundaries, and communication styles.
- Apply foundational assessment principles to analyze family dynamics using a systems framework.



Genogram Cutout Activity



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Identifying Family Strengths

Note 12 to 15
positive aspects
of the household
pictured

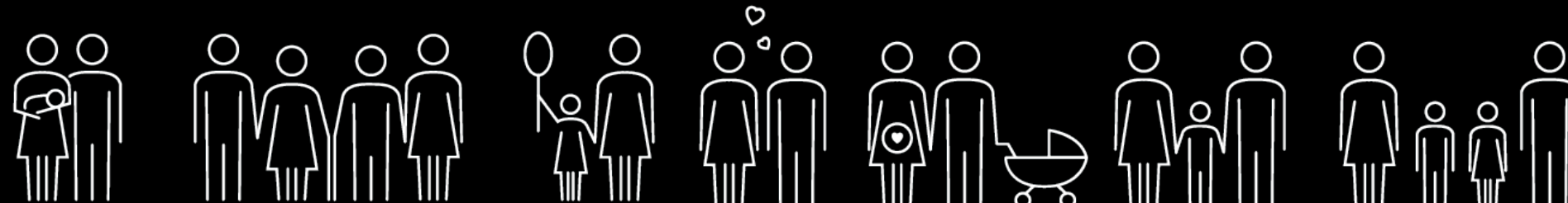


(National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, 2007)

What Families Provide



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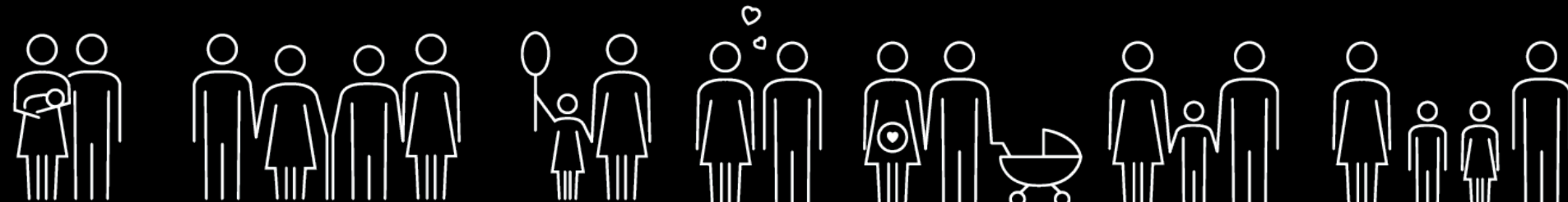


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What Families Provide



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What Families Provide

Provide for physical needs

Procreation

Provide secure attachment bonds

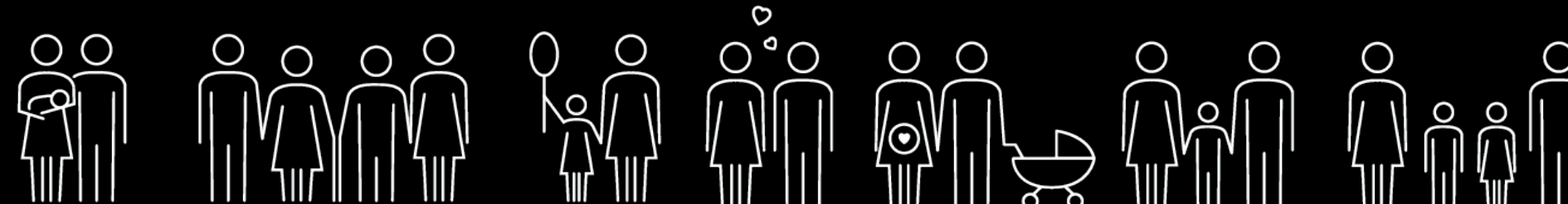
Primary socialization of children

Regulate sexuality

Satisfy emotional needs



(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)

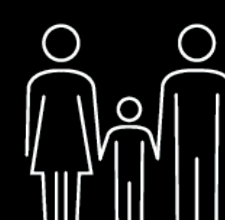
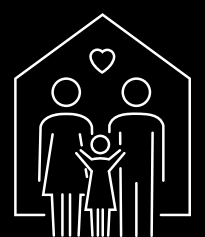
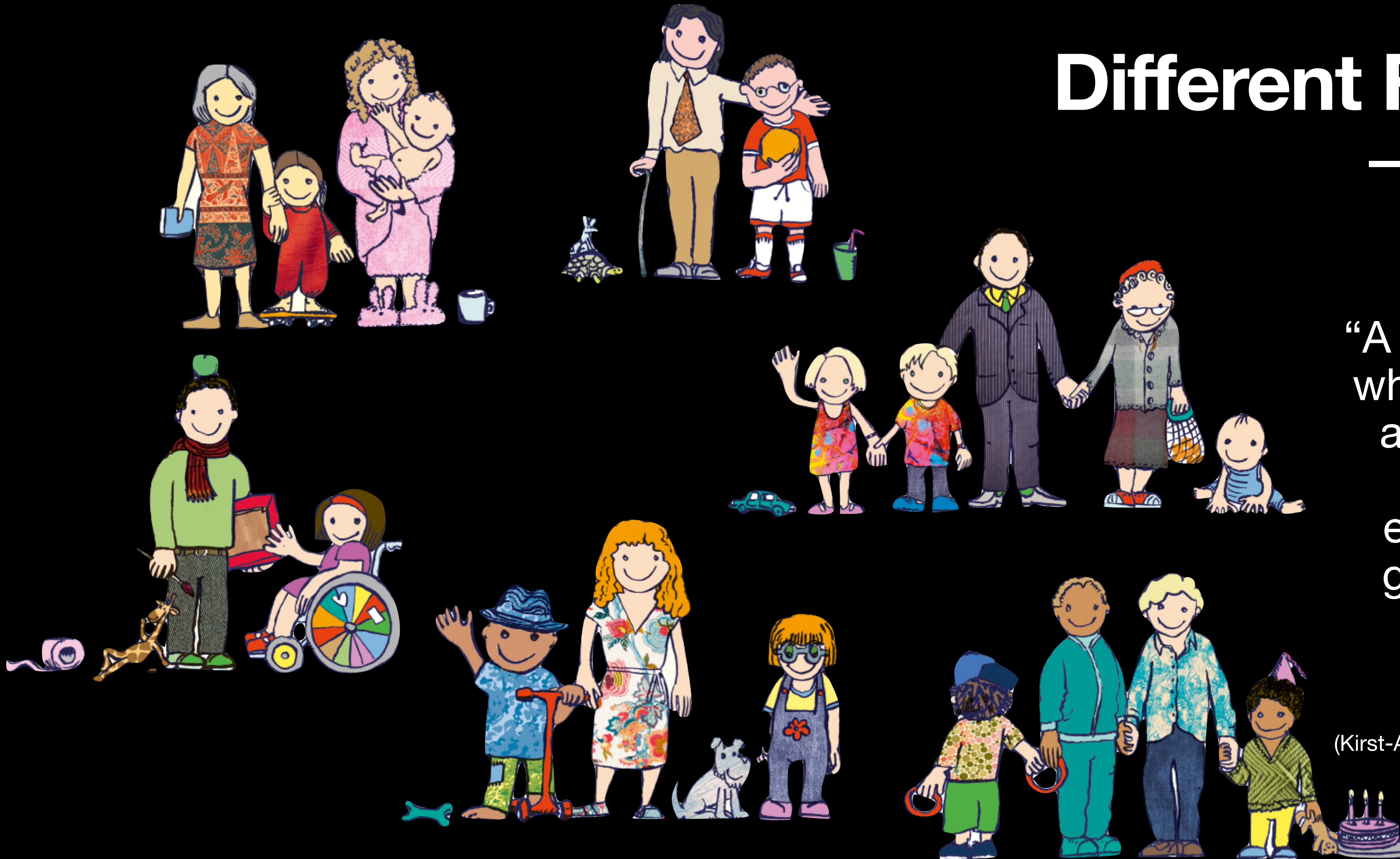


Different Families

—Same Love

“A primary group whose members assume certain obligations for each other and generally share common residences.”

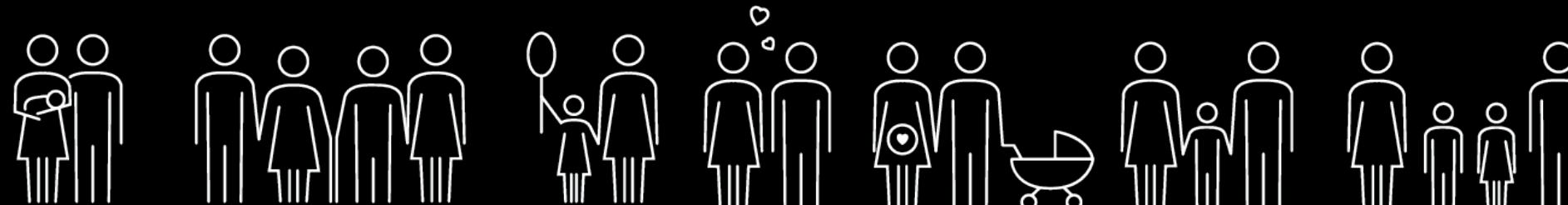
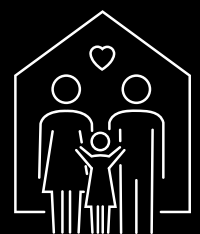
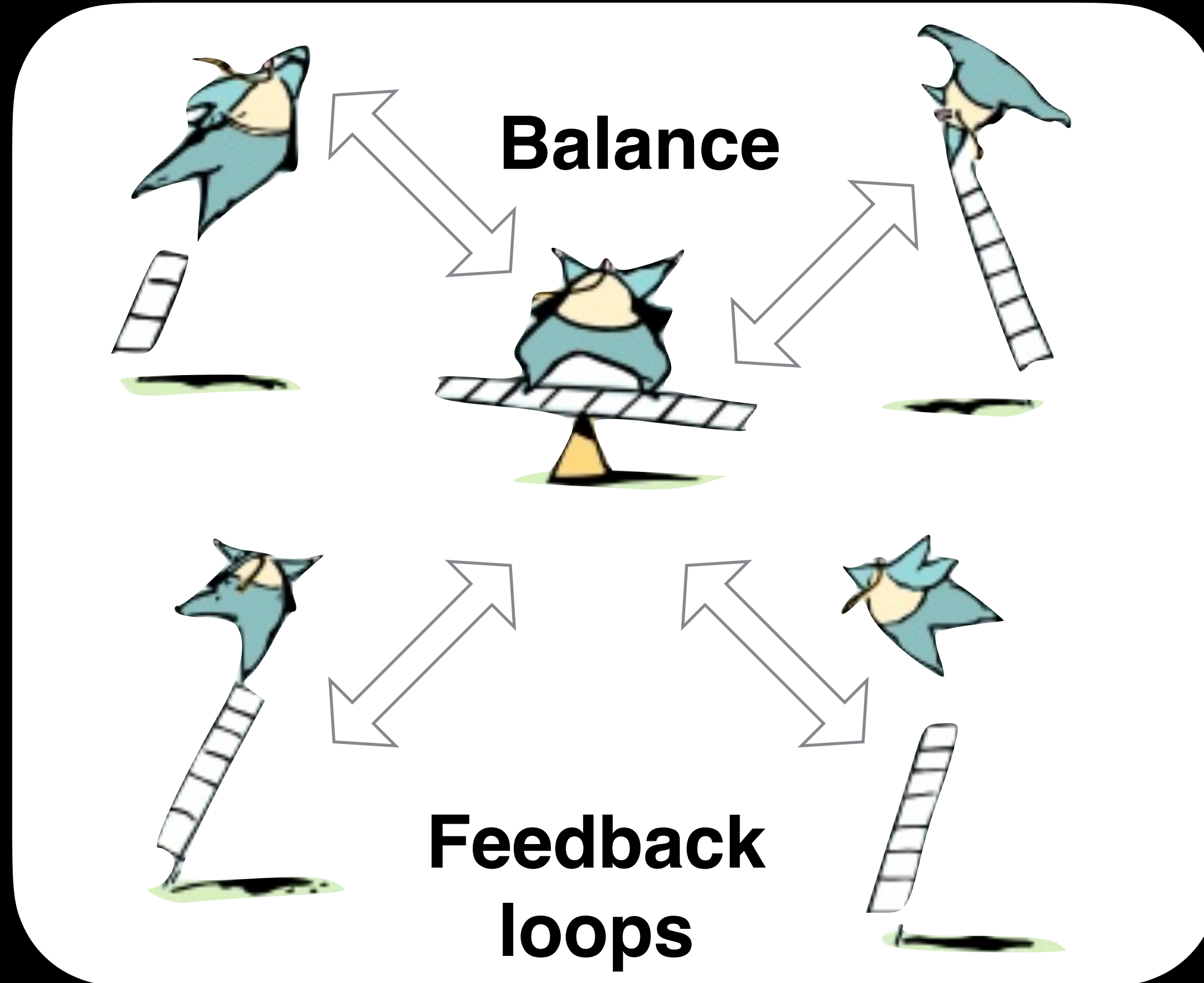
(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015, p. 331)



Homeostasis

“Families may try to maintain the status quo in response to family transitions in the life cycle or stressors associated with abrupt change to the family system itself (e.g., death, divorce, a new addition to the family, an abrupt move), or environmental events such as immigration or move to a new location, or changes in daily routines”

(Hepworth et al., 2023, p. 196)



Boundaries & Boundary Maintenance

Disengagement

diffused boundaries

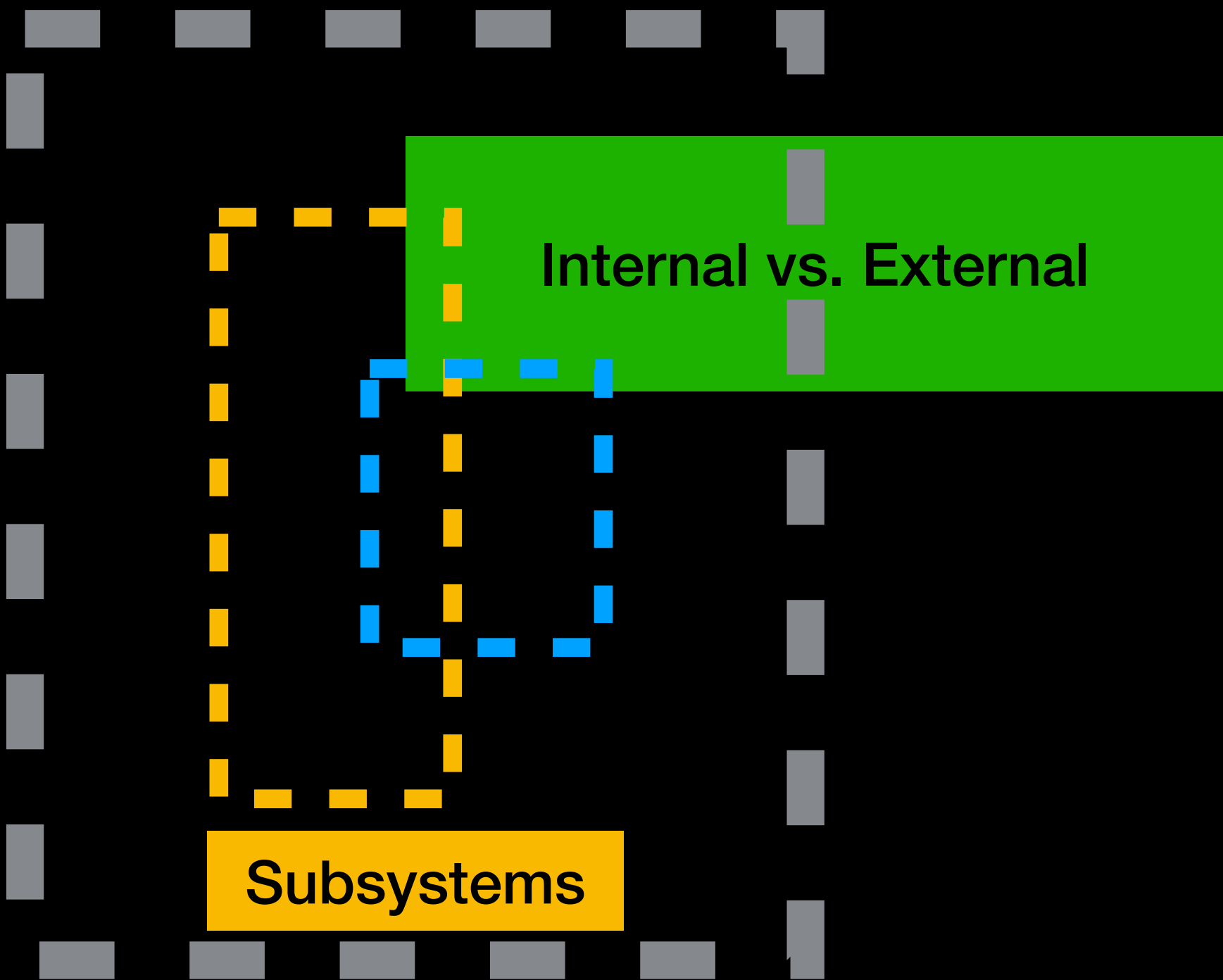


Enmeshment

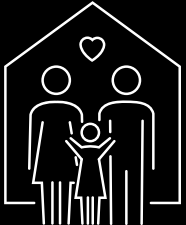
inappropriately rigid

Unique

families unique style,
cultural preferences,
strengths, and needs

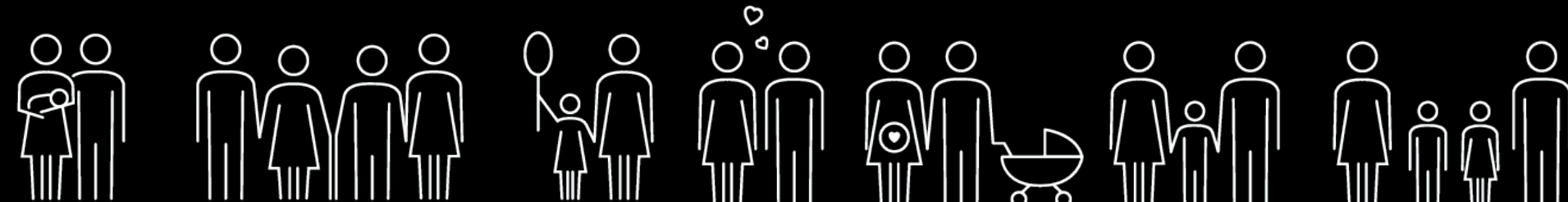


(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)

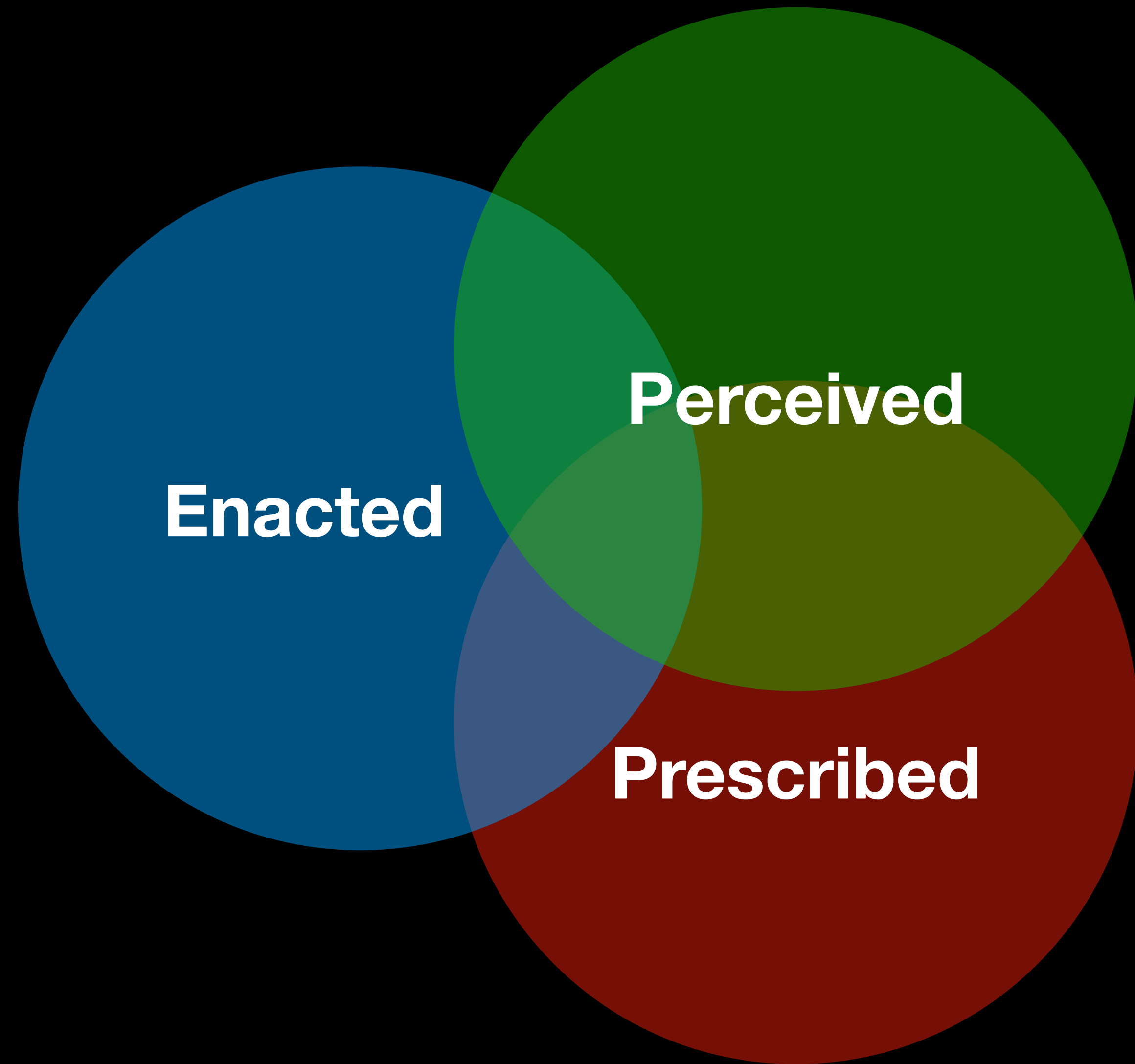


Family Decision Making, Hierarchy, and Power

- Historic / Context
- Reason for distribution
- Covert power
- Power flexibility
- Family perspective



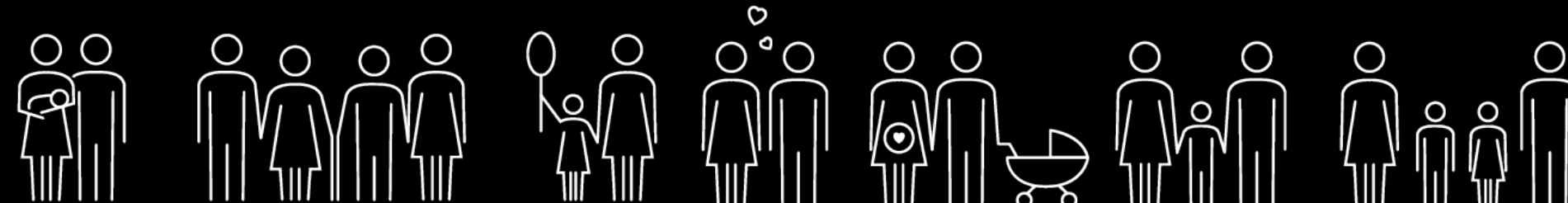
Family Roles



(Hepworth et al., 2023)

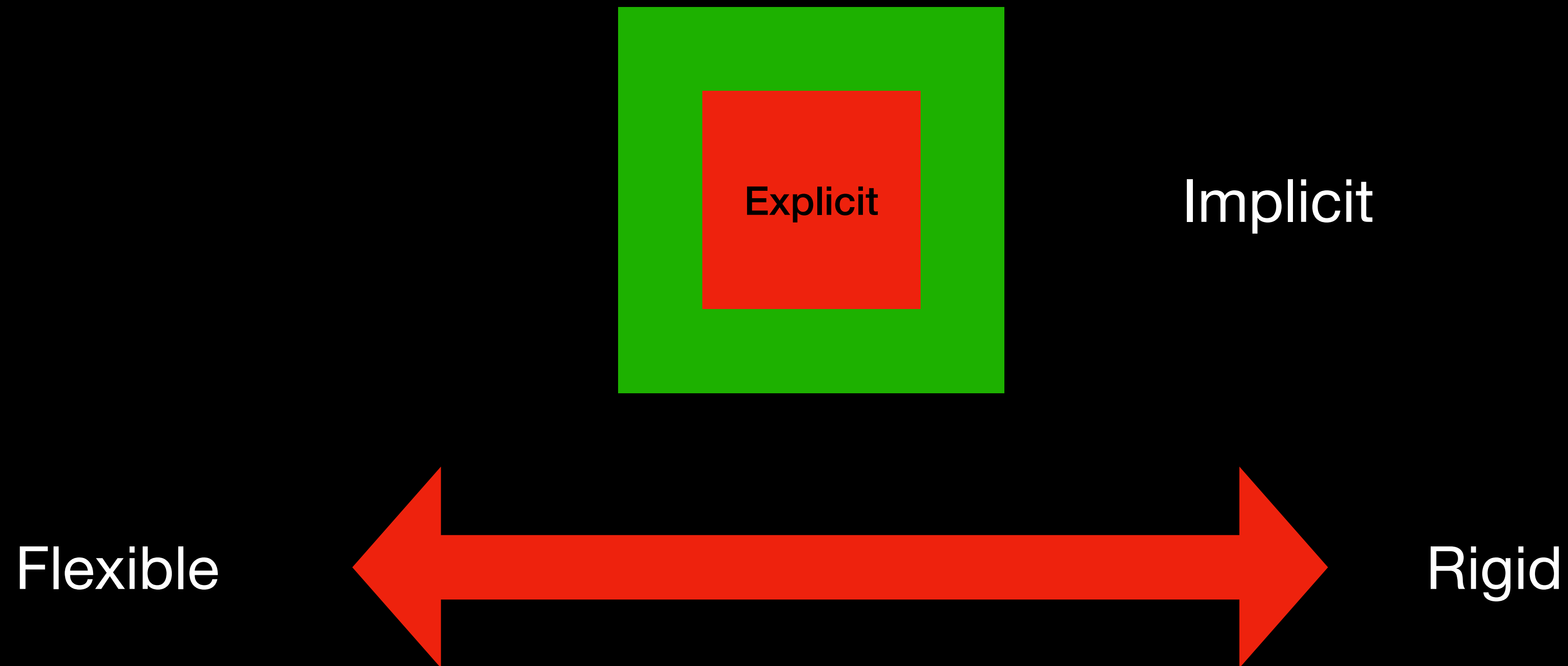


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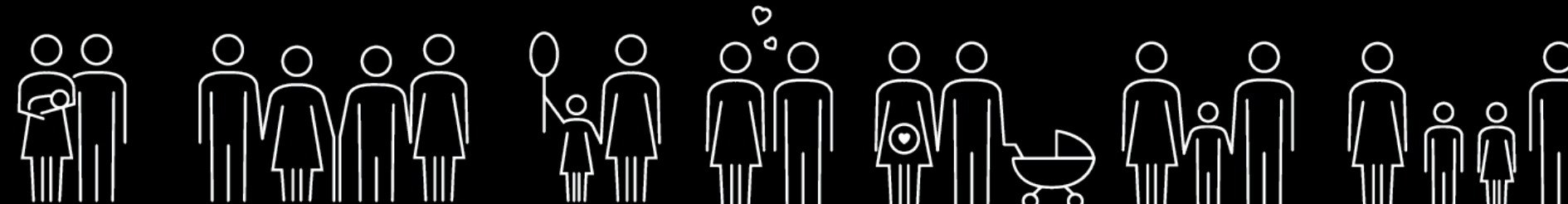


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Family Rules

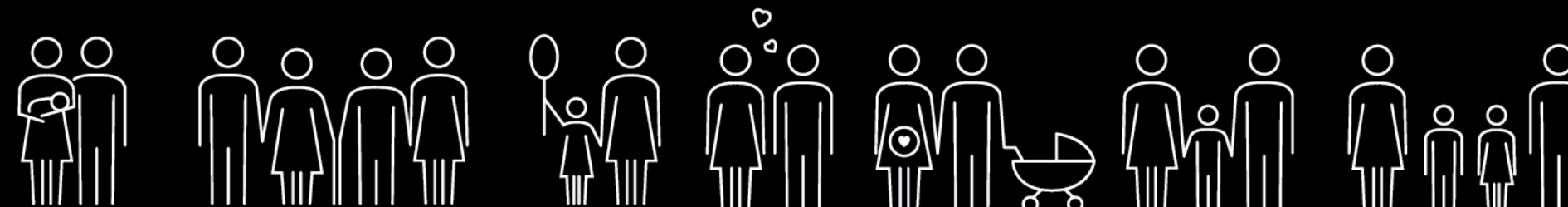
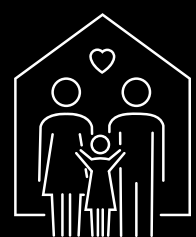


(Hepworth et al., 2023)

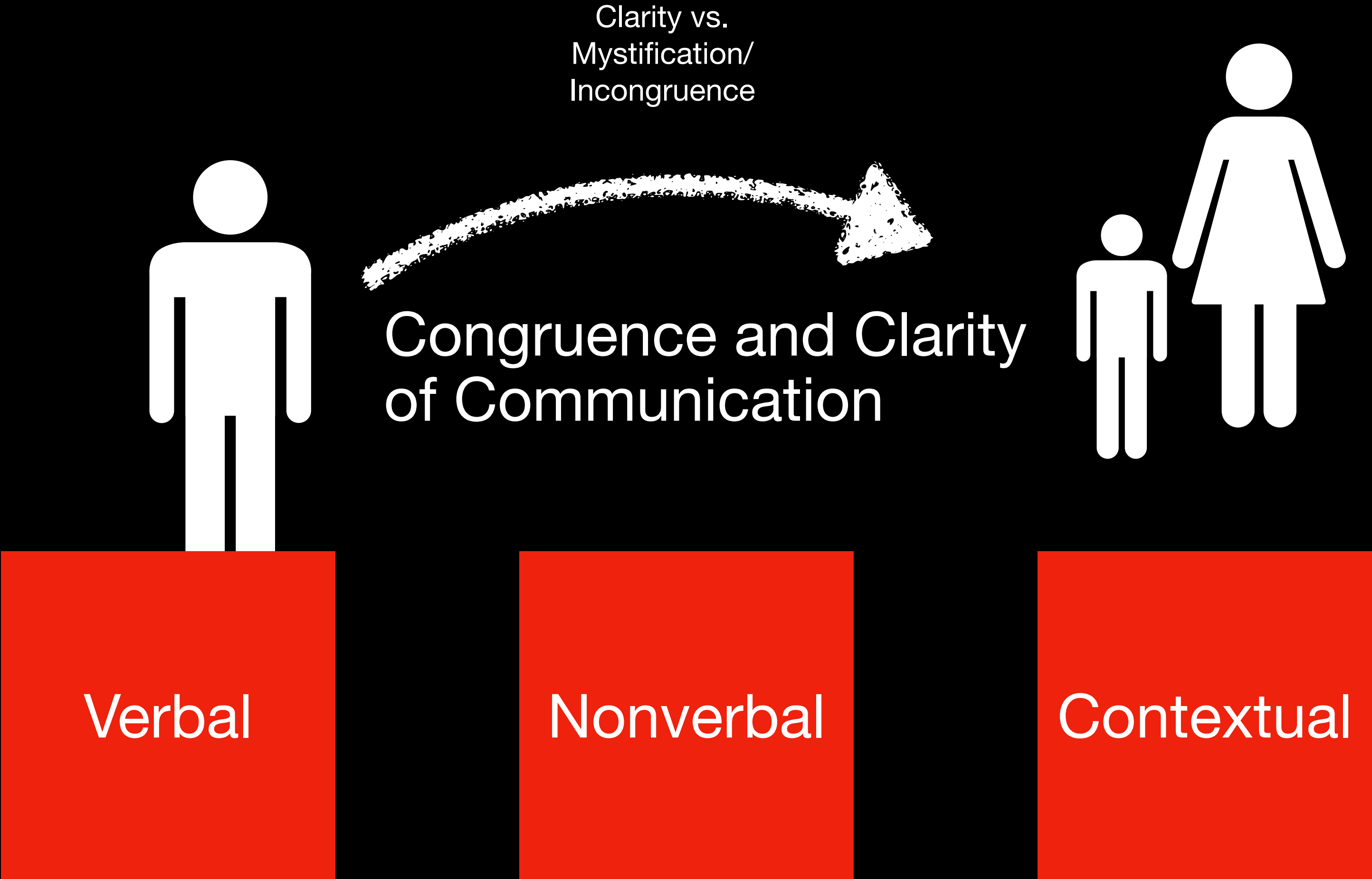


What About Your Family?

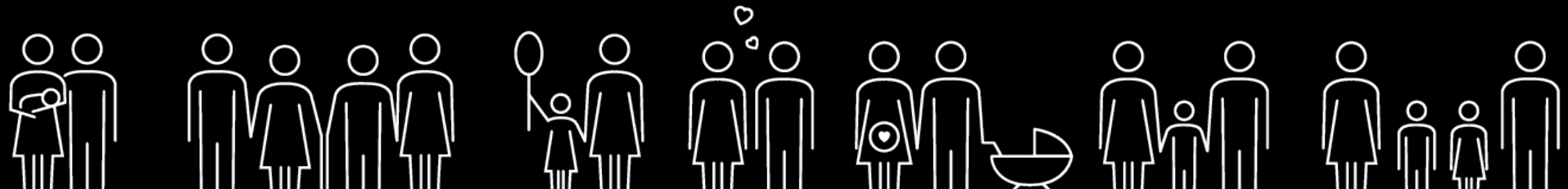
Members
Roles
Norms
Values
Rules



Communication Styles of Family Members



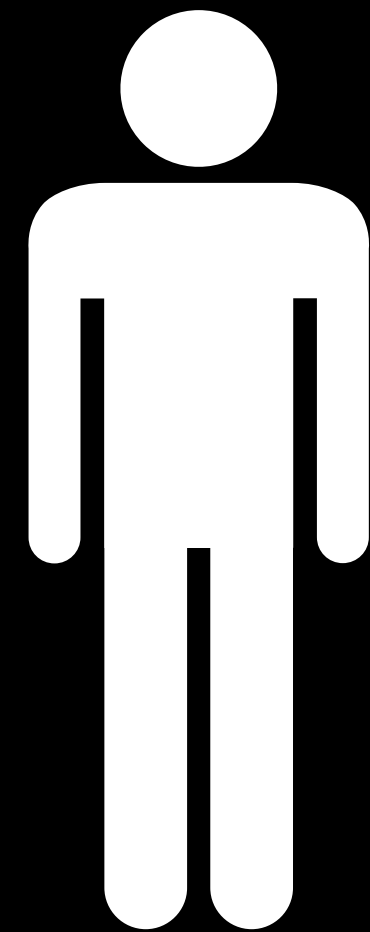
(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)



Communication Styles of Family Members

Sender Skills

Using "I messages"
verses "You..."

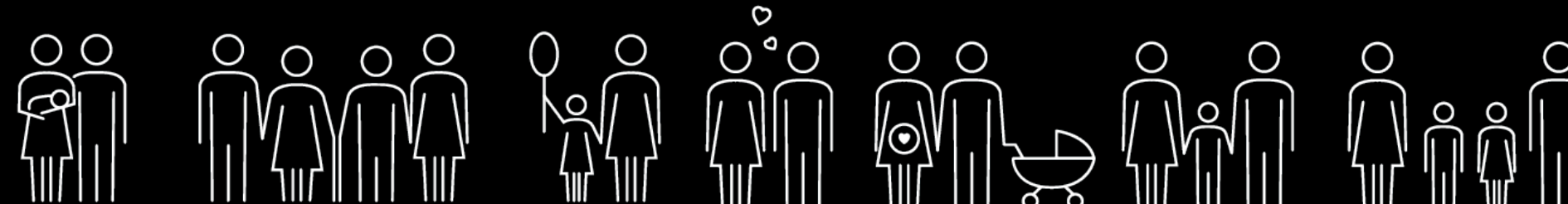


Congruence and Clarity of Communication



Receiver Skills

Physical attending
Paraphrasing
Responses that elicit
clarification
Brief responses



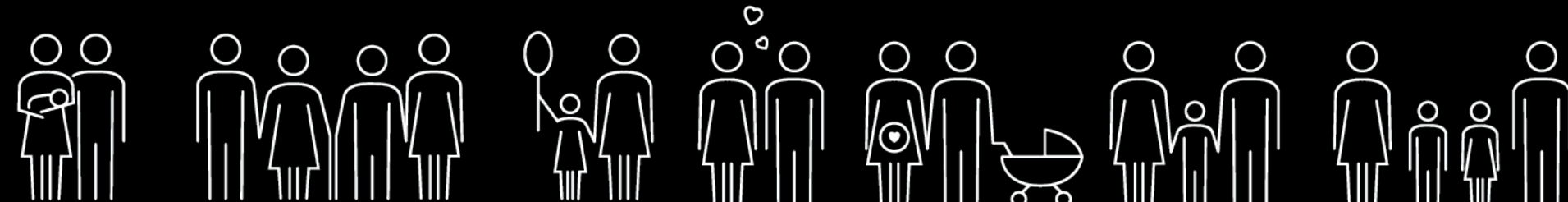
Communication Styles of Family Members

Insoo Kim Berg Solution-Focused Family Therapy Video

(PsychotherapyNet, 2009)



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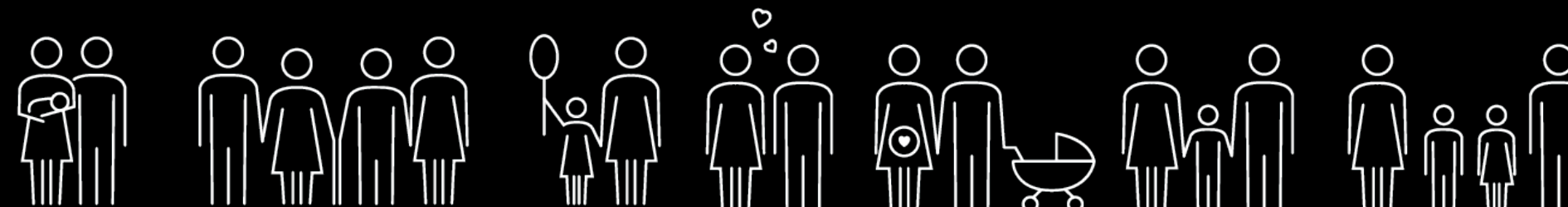
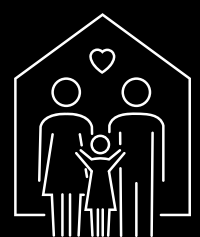
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Family Systems Framework Assessment

Dimensions

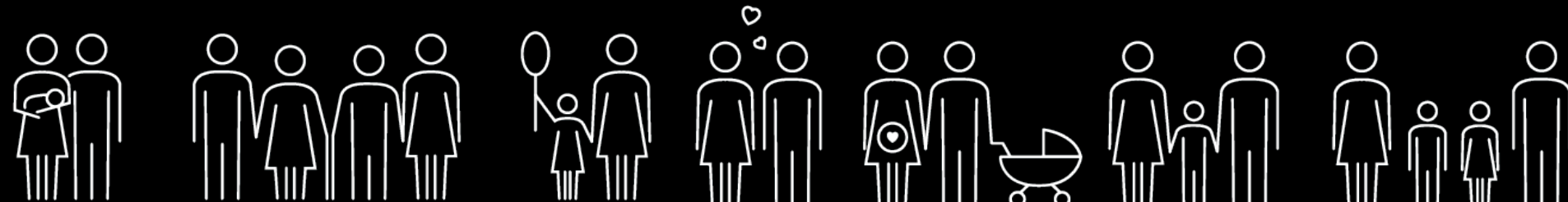
- Homeostasis
- Boundaries and Boundary Maintenance
- External Family Boundaries
- Enmeshment and Disengagement
- Family Decision Making, Hierarchy, and Power
- Family Roles
- Communication Patterns in Families
- Family Life Cycle
- Family Rules
- Social Environment
- Family Adaptive Capacity (Stressors and Strengths)

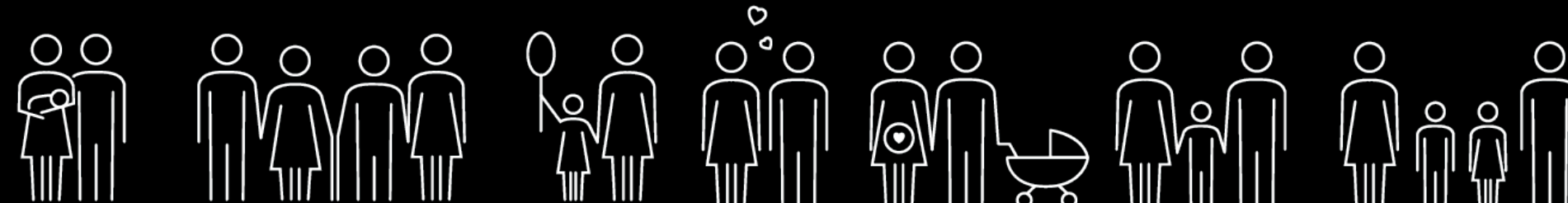
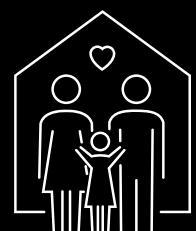
Review the Handout Applying Family Systems Framework Assessment. What kind of things might you expect to hear in each of these areas?



Family Life Cycle

1. Unattached young adult
2. New couple
3. Family with young children
4. Family with adolescents
5. Family that is launching children
6. Family in later life





Family Adaptive Capacity

Family Stressors

Family Strengths &
Resilience

Family Cycle
Frequency and Duration
Magnitude and Number

Social support
Internal cohesion and commitment
Creativity and flexibility
Appraisal, insight, and meaning
Initiative and achievement
Boundary setting

(Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2015)

